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First Committee

4th Meeting

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New York

Chairman: Mr. R. González ..... (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the programme of work and agreed timetable, the Committee will first elect other officers and then continue with its general debate.

Before we proceed with our work, I would like, on behalf of the Committee, to welcome the group of disarmament fellows who are with us today. For the past twenty years, this disarmament fellowship programme has already trained several hundred young diplomats, who have made significant contributions to the global efforts in the cause of disarmament and international peace and security. Some of them have become important delegates of their countries, like the distinguished delegate of Argentina who is present among us today.

As you will recall, at its second meeting, held on 23 September, the Committee decided to postpone the election of other officers to a later date. Today I am pleased to inform you that as a result of intensive consultations, the regional groups nominated three candidates for the post of Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Günther Seibert of Germany from the Group of Western European and other States, Mr. Kestutis Sadauskas of Lithuania from the Group of Eastern European States, and Mr. Tarig Ali Bakhit of the Sudan from the Group of African States.

In the absence of other nominations, and recalling rule 113 of the rules of procedure and the established practice, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Günther Seibert, Mr. Kestutis Sadauskas and Mr. Tarig Ali Bakhit elected Vice-Chairmen of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): May I express to the three Vice-Chairmen my warmest congratulations on the distinction that has been conferred on them, and assure them of my utmost support and cooperation in the joint discharge of responsibilities incumbent upon us.

Following the informal consultations among regional groups, I was informed that the Group of Asian States has nominated Mr. Carlos Sorreta of the Philippines as candidate to the post of Rapporteur of the Committee.

As there are no other nominations, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to follow the same procedures and to dispense with the secret ballot and declare Mr. Carlos Sorreta elected Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express my cordial congratulations to Mr. Carlos Sorreta upon his election as Rapporteur of the First Committee, and I invite him to take the seat reserved for him at the podium.

I am pleased to note that by completing the election of the Bureau members the Committee this year have established an important pattern of rotation for the posts of chairman and rapporteur among various regional groups.

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particularly in view of the fact that the Group of Asian States will take up the chairmanship of the First Committee in the year 2000.

We will now continue with the general debate. The first speaker on my list is the representative of Myanmar, on whom I now call.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): Mr. Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to extend to you the warmest congratulations of the delegation of Myanmar on your well-deserved, unanimous election as the Chairman of the First Committee. We also pay tribute to the other members of the Bureau.

The post-cold war era has presented us with both great challenges and opportunities. It is important that we make the most of these opportunities and cope with the challenges effectively. However, we regret to note that 1999 has been a frustrating year for arms control and disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament was locked in an impasse and unable to agree even on a programme of work for its 1999 session. A third session of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Preparatory Committee was unable to make any recommendations on substantive matters. Even the future of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been called into question.

These difficulties are not due to procedural issues. They are rooted in substantive issues and are due to mind-set and attitude problems. It is disconcerting to note that the nuclear-weapon States are now apparently placing greater emphasis and reliance on nuclear weapons. It is also regrettable that some nuclear-weapon States still show reluctance to engage in a serious dialogue on nuclear disarmament in the multilateral context.

The Myanmar delegation is always stressing the crucial logic of nuclear disarmament. The logic is undeniably valid and overpoweringly compelling. Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are indivisible and inseparable. We cannot enforce nuclear non-proliferation effectively without nuclear disarmament. Despite this compelling logic, the nuclear-weapon States are apparently still living in the world of illusion where they hope they can retain nuclear weapons for unlimited periods of time and prevent the other States from acquiring these weapons. We hope that the nuclear-weapon States will wake up from this nuclear slumber, face reality and do what is necessary to undertake effective measures in nuclear disarmament.

In the meantime, international support for nuclear disarmament has been growing and gaining momentum. We indeed welcome the report of the Tokyo Forum, which outlines a range of important political measures of nuclear disarmament. Although we have some reservations about some recommendations contained in the report on the role and functions of the Conference on Disarmament, we wish to express our support for the substantive recommendations in the report of the Tokyo Forum on practical measures for nuclear disarmament.

As a consistent and ardent advocate of nuclear disarmament, my delegation has been tabling the resolution on nuclear disarmament at the annual sessions of the United Nations General Assembly since 1995. Myanmar's resolution has introduced the concept of the multilateral negotiation on nuclear disarmament, in addition to bilateral negotiations and the possible future plurilateral negotiations. My delegation, together with the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and other sponsors, is tabling the follow-up draft resolution on nuclear disarmament in the First Committee at this year's session as well.

We should like to reiterate our call to establish on a priority basis an ad hoc committee at the beginning of the 2000 session of the Conference on Disarmament to commence multilateral negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. The call for the multilateralization of nuclear disarmament efforts has also been reiterated by the subsequent seven-nation resolution on the same subject.

We are encouraged to learn that the bodies concerned have indicated some degree of flexibility on the institutionalization of multilateral efforts for nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. We urge all the member States of the Conference on Disarmament to show maximum flexibility and find a compromise solution to establish,on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee or a subsidiary body on this question at the beginning of its session in the year 2000.

We are disappointed that the Conference on Disarmament this year once again has been unable to meet the urgent need of the time to re-establish an ad hoc committee on a fissile material ban to commence negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Under the prevailing circumstances, we can see certain difficulties in the future negotiation process and in concluding negotiations on a fissile material ban in the Conference. But at least we should make a start on this

issue without any further delay. We feel that any further delay on this issue will be self-defeating and will cause difficulties in our endeavours to move forward on other issues. We therefore call upon the member States of the Conference on Disarmament to intensify their efforts to re-establish the ad hoc committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive purposes and commence negotiations on the FMCT at the beginning of the 2000 session of the Conference.

We believe that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the cornerstones of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. The CTBT is not entirely satisfactory, but it is the best agreement we could produce under the prevailing circumstances. The universal adherence to and effective implementation of the CTBT will prevent the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and their further proliferation. Without the CTBT, the floodgates of nuclear proliferation would be open. For this reason, it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure an early entry into force of the CTBT and the universal and strict adherence to it.

But now even the matter of entry into force of the CTBT is in question. It is regrettable that the ratification process has been delayed in some nuclear-weapon States; in fact, the nuclear-weapon States ought to lead the way for other States to join the Treaty.

The issue of security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States is also another crucial issue that needs to be addressed in the First Committee, in the NPT forum and in the Conference on Disarmament context. We recognize the significant contribution made by the zone-specific negative security assurances accorded by the nuclear-weapon States to the States of the nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. This constitutes an important achievement, as such negative security assurances now cover well over 100 States.

Nonetheless, we believe that the global legal regime of nuclear non-proliferation under the NPT does require a corresponding global legal regime of security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. For this reason, it is incumbent on all the States parties to the NPT to work out an international legal instrument on security assurances, both negative and positive, for non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT at the earliest possible date. We hope that we will be able to produce some tangible results on this issue at the 2000 NPT Review Conference or to establish a mechanism to carry out substantive work on this issue. At the same time, we intend to pursue this issue at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

Despite its inability to undertake any substantive negotiations during its 1999 session, the record of the Conference on Disarmament for this year is not entirely a nil return. The only high point in the work of that Conference this year came on 5 August, when it admitted five new member States — namely, Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia. We extend our warmest congratulations to the new member States on their admission to the Conference. We also wish to take this opportunity to express our support for the applications of the Philippines and Thailand for membership in the Conference.

The Conference on Disarmament is a unique institution and is irreplaceable in its role as the single multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament. However, we need to explore ways and means to further strengthen its role while maintaining its present character.

As we approach the next millennium, it is necessary to lay down a new set of principles, objectives and priorities for arms control and disarmament for the first decade in the twenty-first century and beyond. The international community will get two great opportunities in the near future. One is the 2000 NPT Review Conference to be held in New York in April and May of next year. Another will be the fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) to be convened in the near future, though dates for this session have not been fixed as yet. In the event that these sessions adopt new sets of principles, objectives and priorities, it is crucial that such principles, objectives and priorities be of a substantive nature and constitute a distinctive advance over the decision on principles and objectives of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Let me now turn briefly to the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. I wish to express the deep appreciation of the delegation of Myanmar for the substantive contribution made by the Regional Centre in promoting awareness of security and disarmament issues and a regional security dialogue among the Member States in the region, which has come to be known as the "Kathmandu process". Regional conferences, seminars, workshops and meetings on disarmament issues organized by the Centre are extremely useful and beneficial to the Member States. We commend the Centre for its impressive

achievements and express our full support for its ongoing activities and its present interim arrangement for the Director to operate from United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Next year, the year 2000, will be crucial for arms control and disarmament. There are possibilities and prospects for breaking the ice on important issues such as nuclear disarmament, the FMCT, security assurances and the strengthening of the NPT regime and the NPT review process. These possibilities and prospects will materialize into concrete results only if all parties concerned, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, show political will and flexibility. The nuclear-weapon States bear greater responsibility than the non-nuclear Member States on this score. The nuclear-weapon States should lead the way by showing greater flexibility in order to overcome the present impasse on nuclear and other disarmament issues.

To this end, let us — all Member States, nuclear and non-nuclear — redouble our efforts to overcome the present impasse and move forward.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, it gives me pleasure to express to you our heartfelt congratulations on your election. We are confident that your abilities and your diplomatic experience will contribute to the success of our debates. May I also congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election.

We wish also to express to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs our appreciation of the statement he delivered yesterday, in which he voiced the concerns and challenges that the international community faces in the field of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and their direct influence on international peace and security and on human, economic, environmental and social development.

Despite the end of the cold war and the conclusion of several treaties and conventions in the field of disarmament concerning prohibited weapons, especially nuclear weapons, in order to ease tension and conflicts in many countries of the world, the international community continues to face imbalances in regional and international security in view of the continuing national, regional and international conflicts and wars. Certain countries still possess and store prohibited weapons and nuclear weapons. Faced with these facts, the international community should work to remove these weapons and should continue its efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the problems. Furthermore, regional cooperation and coordination in respect of these problems and their consequences is important for assisting international efforts to find solutions.

Political developments in international relations after the end of the cold war have confirmed the interdependence of the common interests of all countries. This convinces us that, more than at any time in the past, international peace and security require serious international and regional cooperation in which all countries participate on the basis of equality and transparency.

The experiences of wars and conflicts in many parts of the world have proved that the settlement of conflicts and the protection of the security and territorial integrity of countries cannot be achieved through the use of force or the occupation of the land of others. Possession of prohibited weapons or the threat of their use are factors that feed the hotbeds of tension and can result in a direct threat to international peace and security.

The Arab Gulf region, which enjoys a strategic position in international economic relations, has witnessed over the last three decades many disputes, wars and even occupation, instances of which still exist in the Gulf region. First among these is the occupation by Iran of the three United Arab Emirates islands of the Greater and Lesser Tumbs and Abu Musa since 1971. Then came the war between Iraq and Iran followed by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. There is the fact that certain countries of the region possess weapons of mass destruction and continue their attempts to acquire nuclear weapons and to conduct prohibited tests of such weapons. This has resulted in a race in the Gulf region as well as in the Asian region to possess such prohibited weapons. We reiterate once again the dangers that such policies pose for peace and security in the area.

This led the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to call for the eradication of all weapons of mass destruction and for attempts to find just, peaceful and comprehensive solutions to these disputes as well as for finding ways to put an end to cases of occupation, ways based on the Charter and the norms of international law and good-neighbourliness. The call also includes a commitment to implement the relevant resolutions so that the area can move from an era of tension and instability to a new era of peaceful coexistence, enhancement of human development and the strengthening of bilateral and multilateral relations in the economic, cultural and social fields. This requires political will and courageous decisions that would lead to the achievement of those noble objectives.

In this respect, the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the international community have recognized that peace, security and stability cannot be achieved in the Arab Gulf without a peaceful and just solution that would end the Iranian occupation of our three islands based on the purposes and principles of the Charter and the norms of international law.

Here, we would like to renew our call to the Iranian Government to translate its political discourse into concrete action and to respond positively to the peaceful initiatives proclaimed by the United Arab Emirates and welcomed by the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and other Arab countries and the international community. Hopefully, this would lead to ending the illegal occupation of our three islands which are part and parcel of the sovereign State of the United Arab Emirates.

Furthermore, we would like to renew our support for all peaceful efforts aimed at the containment of any problems or disputes or cases of occupation in various regions, especially in the Middle East, and for their settlement in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international law.

Security is a legitimate right for all countries of the world. It should not be limited to dealing with prohibited armaments; it should also include the enhancement of international cooperation mechanisms in the fields of security, preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping. This requires the international community to avoid using double standards if it is to achieve the desired progress in the field of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons.

We also consider that international and regional security arrangements in the field of the transparency of armaments is an important step that should receive priority in order to enhance confidence-building measures and solidify the foundations of peace, security and stability, to which we aspire.

On this basis, the United Arab Emirates, which has signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention in order to enhance their universality, is concerned about the increase in the nuclear arsenals and arsenals of biological and chemical weapons of many nuclear-weapon States. We are also concerned about the attempts by some to possess and even test nuclear weapons and to develop their prohibited weapons capabilities under the pretext of security deterrence. This contravenes the purposes and goals of these treaties and the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The interest shown by the international community in the question of the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, including the Middle East and the Arab Gulf, is of great significance. We support the proposals calling for the strengthening of the Disarmament Commission and the role of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security, especially as regards the need to guarantee the universality of all disarmament treaties. We wish to stress that all countries are responsible for the implementation of relevant General Assembly resolutions, especially as regards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and the call on Israel to accede to the NPT and to place all its nuclear facilities under the safeguards system of the IAEA. Indeed, Israel's continued possession of these weapons cannot lead to stability and security in this sensitive area, as the countries of the region have vastly different military capabilities. It will definitely plunge the region back into instability, violence and war — not to mention the immediate and direct influence it will have on development, be it human, economic, social or environmental.

We also hope that the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT will ensure the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East that was adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

The United Arab Emirates has expressed its support for the members of the international community on the illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their spread in many countries, in particular those that are experiencing situations of war and conflict. This definitely contributes to instability and adversely affects national and regional security. In order to deal with these increasingly serious situations and phenomena, which have a negative effect on the social, economic and human development of the affected countries, as well as on bilateral relations between neighbouring States, it is essential that countries implement relevant internationally binding resolutions. We hope that the 2000 Conference will have a positive outcome and thus contribute to the achievement of the goals we wish to achieve in this field.

We support regional and international calls for the removal of anti-personnel landmines and the cessation of their random use and for providing humanitarian assistance to their victims. It is also very important to cooperate with

the countries affected by landmines by providing them with necessary information and maps as well as financial and technical help in landmines clearing, taking into account the legitimate security concerns and requirements of these countries in accordance with relevant norms of international law.

In conclusion, we look forward to the third millennium in the hope that it will usher in a new era of international relations based on the peaceful settlement of disputes and situations of occupation and on the eradication of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in order to create a regional and international environment dominated by stability, development and security.

Mr. Bronebakk (Norway): I would like to begin, Sir, by joining the other representatives in congratulating you on your election as chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that your expertise and long experience in the disarmament field will be of benefit to the work of the Committee. I can assure you of our support and cooperation.

Today I will confine my remarks to nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, landmines and small arms in order to be somewhat specific on a limited number of issues, rather than brief and general on a much larger number of subjects. Norway has, of course, firm views and concerns on a number of other issues on the international security and disarmament agenda.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation continue to be of primary concern to Norway and, indeed, to the international community. Our ultimate goal continues to be complete nuclear disarmament. This cannot be achieved without a strengthened non-proliferation regime. We have now reached a point where it is imperative that we find practical political ways of furthering both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in order to enhance international and regional stability. We do not believe that the acquisition of nuclear weapons serves the political or security interests of a State or that it is relevant to the protection or furthering of national interests. If we fail to reduce the political and strategic significance of nuclear weapons in international affairs, our non-proliferation efforts will be in vain. This entails full implementation of existing arms-control and disarmament agreements, continued reductions in existing nuclear stocks and a political willingness to contemplate further steps. If the non-proliferation regime is to be strengthened, the principles and objectives set out by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must be honoured.

We have taken note of various initiatives on nuclear disarmament by several countries for this session of the General Assembly, including the ideas put forward by the New Agenda Coalition. Norway is ready to enter into a dialogue with these and other countries to discuss ideas and means that might contribute constructively to new momentum in this important area.

In order to move forward in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, we believe that the following practical steps should be given priority.

First, the strengthened review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons needs to be revitalized. Norway regrets that the third session of the Preparatory Committee was not able to agree on a substantive recommendation to the 2000 Review Conference. It is important that we agree next year on a strategy that clearly defines the substance, direction and objectives of this process in order to make full use of its potential as a valuable instrument in our efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and promote nuclear disarmament.

Secondly, although the Non-Proliferation Treaty is the major channel for addressing nuclear issues, we believe that other forums should also be utilized for this purpose. All the various measures are important and necessary and must be viewed as mutually reinforcing parts of a whole if we are to achieve the desired results. That is why Norway, together with Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, has submitted a proposal that the Conference of Disarmament should establish an ad hoc working group to study ways and means of establishing an exchange of information and views on efforts towards nuclear disarmament. By establishing a procedure for reporting on nuclear issues and policies, the Conference could serve as an important forum for discussion and exchange of information. This would give the nuclear-weapon States an opportunity to supply information both on the results achieved through unilateral and bilateral initiatives and on their nuclear policies, thus demonstrating their commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Thirdly, we acknowledge that there have been significant reductions in nuclear arsenals. In this regard, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) and the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II) stand out as landmarks in the long

history of arms control efforts. The 1993 START II Treaty has still not entered into force. This is to be deeply deplored. We call upon the Russian Federation to ratify the START II Treaty without further delay so that the Treaty can enter into force as soon as possible. Negotiations on a START III treaty should commence as soon as possible with a view to substantially reducing strategic arsenals.

Fourthly, there is a need for further reductions in tactical nuclear weapons and for their destruction. We know that thousands of tactical nuclear weapons have been withdrawn and put in storage. These weapons must be safely and securely destroyed, not merely stored. It is important to ensure that this part of the disarmament process is continued, as proposed in earlier unilateral declarations made by the United States of America and the Russian Federation.

Fifthly, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was successfully concluded in 1996. The Treaty is an essential supplement to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as it serves as a barrier to the qualitative development of nuclear weapons. The strong reaction of the international community to the nuclear tests carried out in South Asia last year made it clear that there can be no justification for nuclear testing. Achieving universal adherence to this Treaty and securing its entry into force at the earliest possible date must be given highest priority. We hope that the Article XIV Conference just held in Vienna will be able to contribute new momentum. Norway has ratified the Treaty since the First Committee last met. We are prepared to contribute substantially to the Treaty's verification system. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay — especially those in the list of 44 States whose adherence is required for the Treaty to enter into force, including China, Russia and the United States.

Sixthly and lastly, negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), as envisaged in the NPT principles and objectives document of 1995, have unfortunately not yet commenced. The Conference on Disarmament is responsible for getting such negotiations on track, and this challenge must be given top priority by this forum. The ad hoc committee to negotiate a FMCT should therefore be re-established immediately. Such a treaty would be not only a contribution to, but also an integral and indispensable part of nuclear disarmament and an important step towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Failure to address this issue undermines the credibility of the Conference on Disarmament and endangers the implementation of the principles and objectives set out by the NPT Review and Extension Conference in 1995.

We believe there would be merit in establishing voluntary measures that would increase transparency on military inventories of fissile material. At the first session of the Preparatory Committee, in 1997, Norway presented a four-step proposal for increased transparency and confidence-building measures for such holdings, through reporting, inspection and safeguard procedures with a view to introducing agreed, monitored net reductions in these stockpiles.

I would like to elaborate on an issue of considerable concern to my country. It is important that all weapons-usable fissile material be dealt with in a comprehensive manner. Such material poses a challenge to nuclear non-proliferation and to nuclear disarmament. Focusing exclusively on a ban on future production is not enough. The international community must find ways of dealing with the various elements in an overall context. Multilateral initiatives are desirable because important common security interests at the national, regional and international levels are at stake and because current unilateral and bilateral approaches are not sufficient.

During the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference, Norway submitted a proposal advocating that we agree on a set of principles for dealing with weapons-usable fissile material. This includes both fissile material that is now in excess of military requirements and has been removed from the military production cycle, and enriched uranium for non-explosive purposes that is used as fuel for the propulsion of naval reactors. This norm should define the broad obligations of States and guide their subsequent actions in dealing with such material. Such a norm should ensure irreversibility — that is, none of these stocks should be returned or diverted to weapons programmes and the material should be rendered inaccessible for military use as soon as practicable. It should ensure security, which means that the stocks should be made secure from theft and sabotage; safety, which means that the material should not harm human health or the environment; and national control, which means that an effective international standard for material accounting and self-auditing should be developed to help to improve national control of such stocks.

The issues of stockpiles related to excess weapons material and highly enriched uranium for non-explosive

purposes should be included in a multilateral process to be established in parallel with the FMCT negotiations in Geneva. We should consider whether the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should have a role in facilitating a process to this end. This process could serve as a valuable complementary measure and have a favourable effect on the negotiations.

We welcome the intensification this year of the negotiations on a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). Norway is committed to completing the protocol during the year 2000. We believe, however, that it is crucial that the measures set out in the verification protocol be effective. It is now important that we focus on devising sound declaration procedures and effective means of following up these declarations. Together with traditional challenge investigations, randomly selected visits will be a cornerstone in a future BWC verification regime.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is an important contribution to the removal of threats to regional and international stability. It is a matter of concern that a considerable number of signatories have yet to ratify the Convention, and that still a significant number of countries have neither signed nor ratified this instrument. We urge all States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention as soon as possible. We share the concern expressed by the European Union that some States parties still have to fulfil their obligation in relation to the declaration required by the Convention. We call on all States parties to fulfil these obligation without further delay.

The entry into force and practical implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction have brought us a great leap forward in our efforts to eradicate the tremendous human suffering caused by these weapons. The first meeting of the States parties, held in Mozambique early this year, established a machinery for the practical follow-up of the Convention. The inter-sessional work programme is based on the participation of all relevant actors in this field. It is essential that we now ensure an effective implementation and provide the necessary resources for realizing the humanitarian goals set out in the Convention.

To enhance the efficiency of this work, mine action projects should be integrated into overall plans for national reconstruction and rehabilitation. Coordination groups should be established at the country level for this purpose. Such groups should preferably be headed by the national authorities and include donors, international organizations and relevant national and international non-governmental organizations.

When it comes to victim assistance, it is important to recognize that efforts in this area should be regarded as an integral part of mine action and viewed within a broader context of national health plans and general disability issues.

Strong non-governmental organization networks must be part of global mine action efforts. We must vigorously follow up the partnership between governmental and non-governmental actors and between mine-affected countries and other countries, which was so successfully developed during the Ottawa process.

Norway is looking forward to the first annual conference of the States parties to the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which will take place later this year. Both the anti-personnel landmine Convention and the amended Protocol II, with its consultation mechanism, ensure that the landmine issue will continue to be on the international disarmament agenda in the future. It is important that States parties submit the required national reports prior to this conference. I would like to take this opportunity to call on all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and the protocols thereto, and in particular the amended Protocol II on landmines.

The proliferation, misuse and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons is an area of great humanitarian concern. Small arms and light weapons are the most widely used instruments of violence in the increasing number of armed conflicts since the cold war, causing millions of casualties that include a high proportion of civilians. We must all accept our share of the responsibility for this situation. We have a common problem and we need to work together to find adequate solutions.

The small arms issue is complex and needs to be approached in a comprehensive and multidisciplinary way. Disarmament, human rights, humanitarian and development expertise should be involved. Our approach should also be practical and focused. Solutions to the small arms problem can at this stage probably best be found at the local, national and regional levels. We therefore strongly support regional efforts such as the Economic Community of West

African States moratorium and the Code of Conduct adopted by the European Union.

Norway supports convening an international conference on all aspects of small arms by 2001. It is important that the preparations for the conference start as early as possible. The preparatory process must be open and transparent. We need constructive discussions on what the specific agenda of the conference should be. Ideally the conference should, *inter alia*, support and supplement existing initiatives and efforts while avoiding the duplication of work done in other forums and contexts.

Our security agenda is more complex than ever before. Future security depends on a mixture of regional and global initiatives and measures. It also depends on a comprehensive approach to problems related both to weapons of mass destruction and to conventional weapons. Together with other countries, we will play a constructive part in multilateral efforts, including the discussions during this session of the First Committee of the General Assembly to further the disarmament and non-proliferation objectives on the international agenda in order to enhance stability and security in the world.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee, and to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections.

The First Committee is convened today, during the last session of the General Assembly before the turn of the millennium, in the aftermath of the serious developments that have recently occurred in the international arena and that pertain directly to the field of disarmament. As serious as they are, these developments should be properly assessed in order that we may remain focused on our clear and ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament and be better able to focus our sights on the best interests of the international community. They must also be assessed in the light of our common commitment as reflected in the very first words of the Charter of the United Nations, namely, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

As we approach the new millennium, I find it pertinent to re-emphasize the priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament. These priorities have been clearly outlined by the 1978 Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which accorded the highest priority to nuclear disarmament, followed by other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. It remains our firm view that these priorities should be observed until we decide otherwise, if and when we have reached the day when we would have fulfilled our obligations in accordance with that first special session devoted to disarmament. We believe that the speedy convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should not be held hostage to the consent of one party or another.

The end of the cold war created a golden opportunity and generated much hope that the community of civilized nations would finally be able to save the world from military doctrines based on the retention of nuclear arsenals. Regrettably, the world is witnessing today both the development and proliferation of these destructive doctrines at a time when we all aspire to their eradication and to living without them. In this context, I wish to quote from the findings of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons:

> "The possession of nuclear weapons by any State is a constant stimulus to other States to acquire them."

Time and experience have proven the relevance of these words.

The logical question to be asked today is this: How long will the five nuclear-weapon States continue to turn a blind eye and ignore this dangerous situation and persist in setting a negative example? We seriously wonder whether conducting additional nuclear tests is what is needed to awaken the international community from its catnap.

Several initiatives have indeed been launched. Allow me to refer here to the joint declaration of the New Agenda Coalition — in which Egypt took an active part — entitled "Towards a nuclear weapon free of world: the need for a new agenda". We are encouraged by the great support we have already received and hope that the draft resolution, which reflects the repeated calls of the international community for urgent action on the important issue of nuclear disarmament, will also enjoy overwhelming support.

Egypt regrets the continued failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on its agenda. We also regret the continued absence of genuine political will among the five nuclear-weapon States to embark on a serious course of multilateral negotiations leading to the full and complete implementation of the provisions of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We strongly believe that this situation not only contravenes the

obligations contained in article VI of the Treaty, but that it also undermines the whole purpose of the non-proliferation regime of 1995, particularly in the aftermath of the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

The series of nuclear tests recently conducted in the subcontinent has created an urgent need to review policies and positions in the field of disarmament in order to redress the existing gaps. These tests have clearly demonstrated that the legal frameworks established by the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) have proven to be inadequate by themselves to safeguard the continuity and credibility of the global non-proliferation regime. It is therefore our view that there is need for international action based on the following:

First, there is a need to work diligently towards concluding a universal and non-discriminatory treaty banning nuclear weapons, as well as a total ban on fissile material, including the elimination of all existing stockpiles.

Secondly, special attention should be accorded to achieving the universality of the NPT, which is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. A paramount step in this direction would be the adherence of all States to the NPT, without exception. It is also of paramount importance that the 2000 Review Conference — on the basis of the 1995 indefinite extension package comprising three decisions and a resolution on the Middle East — devote special attention to achieving the universality of the Treaty in order to enhance the global non-proliferation regime and the credibility of the Treaty itself.

Thirdly, there must be international recognition that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

Fourthly, there is a need for effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons ny nuclear States. The Conference on Disarmament has a special and serious role in this regard, whereby arrangements that go beyond the limited scope of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) can be made. Such arrangements would provide for measures that ensure comprehensive protection and adequate assistance, thus encompassing the elements of credibility and deterrence.

I now turn to the Middle East. Since 1974, the First Committee and the General Assembly have annually adopted a resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Nuclear-weapon-free zones have mushroomed worldwide and numerous initiatives have been launched to establish such zones in different parts of the world. Regrettably, the situation of the Middle East remains stagnant. Despite its severe frustration over the stagnation that characterizes the issue of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, Egypt firmly supports the implementation of the resolution that this Committee has continued to adopt by consensus since 1980.

Nevertheless, our support for that resolution should not be interpreted as a symbolic support for the unfortunate stagnation that has characterized this issue for a long time. On the contrary, Egypt continues to be committed to an early establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and indeed of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. In a region such as the Middle East, such a zone would be an essential confidence-building measure to facilitate and lead towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace.

Only one country in the Middle East is widely suspected of possessing a significant arsenal of nuclear weapons. This Middle Eastern country operates nuclear installations and facilities without international safeguards. It is the same country that still refuses to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or even to discuss the nuclear issue. It is Israel, which has singled itself out, and no one else.

Nonetheless, the reaction of the international community to this dangerous and provocative situation, if compared to others, remains mitigated at best. Double standards applied in the pursuit of nuclear non-proliferation are dangerous and counterproductive. The international community should clearly choose between whether it is for or against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. There are no in-betweens, no gray areas, no attenuating circumstances. There is no room for hypocrisy.

We fail to understand how certain countries can severely condemn and take such strong action against a single country suspected of being a rogue State while at the same time all but condoning the actions of another country that acts outside international law. The arguments Israel uses in attempting to justify its erroneous position against adhering to the NPT and against placing all its nuclear facilities under the International Atomic Energy Agency's full-scope safeguards are all mere pretexts to shield its nuclear policies and its programmes and ambitions in the

field of nuclear armament. They constitute serious obstacles that undermine numerous initiatives, most notably the initiative of President Mubarak in April 1990 that called for the establishment of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, as well as his broader initiative in June 1998 to hold an international conference aimed at achieving a world free from all weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons.

Egypt supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building mechanism, not as an arms control instrument. We are disappointed, however, over the outcome of the latest meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts, not only because they failed to broaden the scope of the Register to cover military holdings and procurement through national production, but also because they failed to include additional categories, weapons of mass destruction.

In our view, transparency with regard to weapons of mass destruction is as important as transparency with regard to conventional weapons. Security is indivisible. The Group of Governmental Experts for the year 2000 should not be bound by a renewed vague assignment. On the contrary, they should be given a concrete mandate that enables them to overcome the deficiencies that crippled the normal functioning of the United Nations Register in its present form.

I now turn to another subject of significant and increasing importance to the international community, and that is the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We believe that this important issue should be accorded higher attention and enhanced efforts by the international community. In this context, we reiterate our view that the responsibility for the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons does not lie with the recipient parties as much as it lies with the producing and exporting countries. They certainly have a moral and legal responsibility through which they should invoke strict measures to prevent the export of such weapons to other than legitimate Governments.

Egypt, as it attaches special importance to the cause of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, also attaches similar importance to the cause of illicit trafficking in small arms. Egypt participated actively in the Group of Governmental Experts on the causes of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and measures to stop that proliferation.

Egypt has also participated through its chairmanship of the 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, which adopted special guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N.

The current session of the General Assembly will, moreover, discuss a draft resolution on the establishment of the preparatory committee for an international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. Egypt emphasizes that the scope of the conference should be limited only to subjects related to the illicit trafficking in small arms. We believe that the chairmanship of the preparatory committee sessions, as well as that of the conference itself, should be given to affected States which suffer most from this problem. We also believe that the venue of the preparatory committee sessions and the general conference of the year 2001 should ensure the broadest participation of all Member States.

I now turn to landmines. The fact is that Egypt is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, with about 23 million landmines planted in its soil by regional and extraregional belligerents during various international and regional conflicts such as the second World War. Egypt has already stated its position vis-à-vis the Ottawa Treaty in various forums, and there is no need to restate it. Suffice it to say that international efforts aimed at curbing mines should be accompanied by serious and concrete steps geared towards mine clearance. The overall burden should lie with the States responsible, which masterminded the implantation of these mines outside their territories, as was recognized by the final declaration of the Review Conference, held in Geneva in May 1996, on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of the continued efforts of the United Nations system in the field of disarmament in the new millennium. This collective endeavour must strive for optimum coordination between the work of the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, without prejudice to their assigned mandates.

Mr. Al-Hassan (Oman): I congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau for your unanimous election to preside over the work of this assembly. At the same time, I would like to apologize for my colleagues who speak Arabic, but my intervention, which will be very

brief, will be in English. However, the full text, and the official text, of my statement will be circulated in Arabic.

Like many delegations, I have prepared my text at length. However, as of last year, we have decided to rationalize the work of this Committee. Therefore, if you will allow me, I will just highlight the main points in my intervention, and this will be brief.

My country, Oman, is a peace-loving nation and, stemming from this, it has adhered to all multilateral treaties that deal with weapons of mass destruction. This includes, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and, more recently, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which we signed on 23 September of this year.

We believe that time has come for this Committee to revitalize its work and to change its orientation in terms of the agenda before us. We believe we are approaching the new millennium and this new event which marks an historic turn in the history of mankind, necessitates such new thinking on the part of this Committee.

I would like to touch very briefly on my region, the Middle East, as we are part of it, and the Middle East is part of this world. Israeli nuclear programmes remain a disturbing issue to the countries in the region. We cannot fail but to call on the Israeli Government to adhere as soon as possible to the NPT and also to place all its nuclear facilities under strict International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and control.

Referring to the question of small arms, we support the convening of this conference in the year 2001. However, we believe that preparation has to be well thought out, taking into account the views of Member States.

In conclusion, let me reiterate what I have said before, that time has come for this Committee to revitalize its work and to reorient itself for the next millennium.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia wishes to express its congratulations to you on your unanimous election to preside over the deliberations of the First Committee. We remain confident that under your guidance we will make substantive progress in dealing with the important issues on our agenda. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau. Let me take advantage of this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his lucid and illuminating statement on various disarmament issues.

As this is the last session of the First Committee for this century, we deem it important to undertake a reappraisal of our endeavours for disarmament, assess our successes and failures, learn from those experiences and renew our commitment to the noble cause of arms limitation and disarmament as mandated by the Charter. Only days after the signing of the Charter, the world entered a dramatic new era - the nuclear age - which gave a new dimension to all human endeavours and confronted the new Organization with unprecedented problems.

It is to be recalled that the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly, in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was on "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". (*resolution 1 (I), paragraph 5 (c)*)

Since that time, in terms of concrete bilateral and multilateral agreements, the international community has come a long way in achieving arms control and reduction. However, these agreements, though significant, have not been sufficient to curb the arms race or to alleviate the nuclear threat. They have proscribed certain dangerous developments but have not resulted in substantial reductions in any of the major weapons systems. The regional arms races and the accumulation of ever more destructive weapons by a growing number of countries have further compounded the situation.

Regional instabilities, the emergence of ethnic and religious tensions and the continuing and heightened risk of proliferation of both weapons of mass destruction and conventional armaments — taken together with the frequency of internal conflicts — have created serious challenges and undermined regional peace and security. And this is occurring now more than ever. As the tumultuous twentieth century draws to a close, the international community has a solemn obligation to embark upon a course of action that will build on past achievements and truly reflect our collective aspirations and interests at this particularly critical juncture.

Among the notable developments of the recent past has been the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and of the Amended Protocol II of the Conventional

Weapons Convention — although these instruments fall short of universality. Likewise, the adoption last June of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition reflects the importance accorded to conventional arms limitation and the link between these weapons and a multiplicity of issues, including civil strife and socio-economic questions.

Although the Disarmament Commission failed to reach a consensus on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we note with satisfaction the Commission's adoption of guidelines both on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, and on conventional arms limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace.

In addition, the third session of the Preparatory Commission for the year 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) succeeded in dealing with some procedural questions which will facilitate focused consideration of specific issues relevant to the Treaty. The Commission also agreed on the provisional agenda for the Review Conference and the allocation of items to the main committees. Numerous statements were made that attest to the importance of strengthening the review process. Some of the nuclear-weapon States during their interventions provided information concerning certain aspects of their arsenals. Last month, they also issued a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to article VI of the NPT.

However, the global disarmament scene presents a bleak and dismal picture. The steady progress in eliminating nuclear arsenals has come to a virtual halt. Indeed, nuclear weapons have made a disturbing comeback. START II has not entered into force. The modernization and refinement of nuclear arsenals has proceeded apace, while new missions for nuclear forces are continually being envisioned. Strategic doctrines have not only been reaffirmed but also made more ambiguous.

The uncertainties surrounding the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) will have far-reaching ramifications and may well unravel decades of concerted efforts by the General Assembly. Further compounding the situation are the ongoing plans for the weaponization of outer space and for missile defences — plans that are incompatible with the provisions of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. And the continued intransigence of the nuclear-weapon States regarding initiation of negotiations on nuclear and related issues has led to a virtual deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, which does not augur well for our future disarmament endeavours.

These regressive developments call for a sober reassessment of the debilitating attitudes that have for too long determined policies and posturing towards weapons of mass destruction. The indefinite retention of nuclear weapons carries the grave risk of their use, either by design or by accident, with calamitous consequences.

The report of the Tokyo Forum on "Facing Nuclear Dangers: An Action Plan for the 21st Century", released last July, warned of continuing dangers posed by nuclear armaments and projected its vision of how to resolve the nuclear issues. Thus it called for, among other things, concrete steps to reduce nuclear dangers, to adopt nuclear transparency measures and to stop the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes. It also called for an end to the hair-trigger alert status of thousands of nuclear weapons, the reduction of tactical nuclear weapons and parallel reductions by the two leading military Powers to one thousand deployed weapons, regardless of START II ratification or the commencement of START III negotiations.

Recent developments in the political, security and technological fields have made a nuclear-weapons-free world a realizable goal, and we should the seize the opportunity offered in the post-cold-war era to take irreversible steps towards the elimination of these armaments.

As far as the NPT is concerned, my delegation agrees with the widely held view that its objectives encompass non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, and thus these issues are inseparable. We cannot have a non-proliferation regime and nuclear armaments existing side by side indefinitely and unconditionally. As recent events have demonstrated, the non-proliferation regime cannot be ensured in the absence of credible progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. There could be no greater distortion of the truth than the oft-repeated claims of sustained progress in nuclear disarmament. As the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has stated, there is no justification for the maintenance of nuclear arsenals or for a handful of powerful nations basing their security on deterrence. Neither can there be any justification for the insistence that nuclear weapons provide unique security benefits and for the nuclear-weapon States continuing to

monopolize these weapons while pursuing the objective of non-proliferation.

The future of non-proliferation cannot be assured by the wilful violation of its legal basis, by the retention of dubious privileges, by perpetuating inequality, by usurping decision-making and by the strategic subordination of an overwhelming majority of non-nuclear-weapon States. This majority also suffers from discrimination, which is epitomized by the possession of more than 30,000 weapons in the stockpiles — something that is unjust and unacceptable. The vast majority of non-nuclear-weapon States will continue to demand phased nuclear disarmament within a set time-frame.

This is the challenge facing us at the forthcoming review exercise. Although my delegation expected the three Preparatory Commission sessions to lay the groundwork for a successful conclusion of the year 2000 Review Conference, significant differences continue to prevail, not only as regards the fulfilment of obligations set forth in the Treaty, but also vis-à-vis the implementation of the decisions taken in 1995.

It is self-evident that the success of our endeavours in the year 2000 will depend to a large degree on the ratification of the CTBT by all the nuclear-weapon States and those deemed nuclear capable. Those who took the lead must now set an example by ratifying the CTBT without raising issues that have long been agreed upon. The success of the Review Conference will also depend upon initiating negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty that focuses equally on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Indonesia believes that this objective, which was established by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, can be achieved, and we should be able to make progress on this question. But the issue has to be pursued in the context of an agenda to roll back existing arsenals, so that we can address related issues such as stockpiles and future production, verification mechanisms and the right of civilian applications, universality and non-discrimination. Above all, ti will depend upon the resumption in good faith of bilateral efforts and the initiation of multilateral negotiations for the total abolition of nuclear armaments. Hence it will be a testing time for the NPT as it navigates the unknown terrain.

As far as nuclear-weapon-free zones are concerned, it is a source of satisfaction to Indonesia that substantive progress has been made in the establishment of these zones, as a number of countries and regions have demonstrated a determination to pursue this goal. This attests to the reality of these zones' pre-eminence on the contemporary disarmament agenda. It also testifies to the multiple roses these zones play, especially in promoting a stable security environment. In this regard, we look forward to the early accession by the nuclear Powers to the protocol of the Bangkok Treaty.

My delegation shares the concern of many member States about the illicit and covert trade in small arms. In this context, our appreciation goes to the report submitted by the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, whose mandate, among other things, was to assess the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 1997 report and further practical measures to be taken in dealing with illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Taken together, they have raised the global consciousness of the causes and consequences of the unchecked flow of illegal arms.

The statistics are chilling. In the post-cold-war era, almost 90 per cent of conflicts were waged with small arms and light weapons. In all cases of civil strife fought with light weapons and irregular forces, civilians have become the intentional targets and 90 per cent of casualties are now civilians, mainly women and children. This has placed the safety of societies and the security of States in jeopardy and reversed the ratio of military-to-civilian casualties. Further compounding the situation is the technological sophistication of these armaments, which have greatly expanded their lethality and annihilating capabilities. What we have witnessed is indiscriminate warfare on civilian populations with whatever weapons are available, involving a circuitous network of manufacturers, buyers, suppliers and distributors often operating outside the control of state authorities. The easy availability of weapons and munitions to rival factions has been a disincentive to peaceful political settlements that are sorely overdue in many prolonged intrastate conflicts.

Another alarming trend in recent years has been the increasing participation of children in armed conflicts, both directly and indirectly. It is estimated that, currently, more than 300,000 children are serving as soldiers in many areas of the world. The linkage of children to violence in conflict-ridden areas is largely due to the accessibility of small arms. Their future is at stake because they are denied education and because opportunities for counseling to overcome the trauma of hostilities and to prepare for careers are limited. Ultimately, the international community could be faced with an untenable situation for its failure to take adequate and timely steps to deal with this problem.

It is gratifying to note that a number of initiatives have been taken to deal with the problems posed by the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons, which have caused irreparable harm to the fabric of many societies. These initiatives include, *inter alia*, the approach adopted by the United Nations in Mali and the surrounding West African nations; in Albania, the Task Force established by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to formulate Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation; the Inter-American Convention Against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and similar measures adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS); and the Conference on a moratorium of small arms transfers held in Norway.

Our consideration of the issue of small arms has been greatly enriched by these endeavours. They have also focused attention on the formidable problems to be encountered, including the root causes of conflicts; non-interference in areas of tension by States in pursuit of specific interests; a State's control over its own security; arms supply and illicit activities; the delinking of small arms to drug trafficking and terrorism; the reintegration of former combatants into unified armed forces; and confidence-building measures and restraint in armaments to forestall turmoil and instability in the post-conflict era. In our view, these and other complex issues will have to be examined at the proposed international conference to be held in the year 2001 at a site most convenient to Member States if they are to evolve into a concrete plan of action.

In conclusion, peace and security in the new millennium call for a shift in this century's expenditures from military to civilian programmes. That will entail drastic cuts in weapons and forces, the transformation from a military to a peace economy, and the diversion of burgeoning military budgets to developmental goals. But first, we must abandon the mindsets of a bygone era and adopt new approaches that will further consolidate progress in arms limitation and disarmament.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): I join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee, confident in the knowledge that you will be able to guide its work to a fruitful conclusion.

The systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of their complete elimination, remains one of the priority tasks of the international community — so says the Secretary-General in his report to the General Assembly. However, little was achieved in this area in the past year. What we witnessed were promises made by the nuclear-weapon States to move towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as juxtaposed against the reality of national and regional security needs based on continued possession of nuclear weapons and of their qualitative improvement. We are justified to ask: Wherein lies the commitment needed in order to move towards the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free world through the total elimination of nuclear weapons?

The outlook for nuclear disarmament for the foreseeable future therefore remains bleak. The established nuclear-weapon States still cling in blind faith to their doctrine of nuclear deterrence, in the belief that nuclear weapons remain essential to their national security, thereby encouraging others to aspire to similar status for the same reason — which, however, is frowned upon. At the Conference on Disarmament, the start of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material, which in the autumn of 1998 had seemed possible, is yet to materialize. The Conference on Disarmament also failed yet again to agree on a programme of work. At the same time, no consensus was reached at the United Nations Disarmament Commission on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Added to these are, *inter alia*, the nuclear tests in South Asia, the failure of the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the three major nuclear Powers — China, Russia and the United States — and the lack of ratification by the Russian Duma of the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II).

The attitudes of the nuclear-weapon States have been rather disappointing, to say the least. They remain averse to any serious multilateral engagement on current disarmament problems and future prospects. They continue to take the attitude that the issue of nuclear disarmament is best left to them to negotiate. Yet we see no real progress in this sphere. It has been six years since the signing of START II between Russia and the United States; yet, it has not entered into force and awaits ratification. Unless this is done, the process of moving towards the initiation of negotiations on START III is not likely to happen.

Clearly, these developments do not augur well for the future of disarmament. Despite assurances by States with nuclear capabilities of their commitment towards disarmament, their actions have not matched their words. Are these not manifestations of the world's sliding,

inadvertently or otherwise, down the path of nuclear proliferation? Unless concerted action is taken, and taken soon, to reverse this dangerous trend, existing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regimes could very well become hollow instruments.

An analysis of the security policies of the nuclear-weapon States reveals their unshakable reliance on nuclear weapons based on the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. This position is further aggravated by the nuclear cooperation programmes that some of them maintain with non-nuclear-weapon States, which include training in nuclear-weapons use, as well as the deployment of nuclear weapons in cooperating States. This is a clear violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), under which nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty undertake not to transfer to non-nuclear-weapon States any nuclear weapons or control over such weapons, and non-nuclear-weapon States undertake not to be the recipients of such transfer.

Clearly, the current situation promotes nuclear proliferation of another kind. It promotes instability in that it would justify any nuclear-weapon State's supplying nuclear weapons to its allies for similar strategic reasons. It should be recalled that the Non-Aligned Movement, at the 1998 session to prepare for the 2000 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, called on the nuclear-weapon States to refrain from nuclear sharing for military purposes under any kind of security arrangements.

The cavalier attitude of the nuclear-weapon States towards nuclear disarmament is likely to undermine existing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regimes. It makes a mockery of non-nuclear States' signing and ratifying treaties and protocols to restrict and control nuclear capabilities which they do not even possess to begin with. Over time, they will begin to question the usefulness of these treaties and conventions and of their own participation in them.

While my delegation commends the reduction in nuclear-weapon stockpiles, it should be pointed out that there still remain huge stocks of these weapons, whose combined explosive potential is 200,000 times greater than that of the Hiroshima bomb. These weapons are on alert and ready to be fired at a moment's notice. We must guard ourselves against complacency and a false sense of security when the threat of nuclear destruction, whether triggered by design or by accident, lurks in the shadows.

Just a few months away from the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the prospects for a successful outcome of the Conference remain dismal. It has been said by some that the most notable achievement of the third and final Preparatory Committee session for the 2000 Review Conference, held in New York this year, is that it did not fail. The agreements arrived at were on procedural, and not substantive, issues. The inability to agree on substantive issues reflects the chasm between the nuclear-weapon States and their allies and non-nuclear-weapon States on nuclear disarmament. My delegation is concerned that the legal obligations under article VI continue to be unfulfilled, despite the majority's having forsworn the nuclear option by joining the NPT.

While my delegation supports multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, it recognizes the importance and role of bilateral arrangements. Regrettably, however, there is not much to cheer about on this score either. There continues to be a conspicuous absence and lack of interest on the part of the nuclear-weapon States to undertake serious negotiations on disarmament measures between and among themselves. The non-ratification of the CTBT by Russia, the United States and China demonstrates their lack of total commitment and leadership on nuclear disarmament. Undeniably, without their active support and leadership, not much progress can be achieved. The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice in July 1996 reinforced the legal obligation linked to the implementation of article VI of the NPT, but this continues to be ignored. Malaysia, as in previous years, will again submit a similar draft resolution this year that will continue to remind the international community, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, of their obligation to take serious steps to rid the world of nuclear weapons once and for all by commencing multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament leading to the early conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention.

As stated earlier, the Conference on Disarmament continues to be stymied by its inability to agree on a programme of work. It continues to shy away from constituting an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, as called for by the Non-Aligned Movement, to discuss nuclear disarmament. To facilitate the work of the Conference on Disarmament, its programme of work should be automatically renewed without members' having to seek a fresh mandate each year. If not for this procedure, the working group established in late 1998 to consider the fissile material cut-off treaty would have constituted and engaged in serious negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty.

The Conference on Disarmament admitted five new members this year, including Malaysia. There are still 21 others awaiting admission and they should be admitted without further delay. The Conference on Disarmament should make a clean break from the mindset of the past and universalize its membership so as to benefit from the wealth of ideas from the broadest possible membership.

There are other equally important issues which I have not touched on here for the sake of brevity. We will do so at a later stage in the course of the debate.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to pay a tribute to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, under the able and dynamic leadership of Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala. We extend our fullest support and cooperation in its various activities. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to thank various non-governmental organizations that have shared their knowledge and expertise with us, working together towards achieving the common goal of a nuclear-free world. They play an important supporting role to those of Governments in the global disarmament process. Malaysia considers them indispensable partners in a common cause.

Mr. Hayashi (Japan): At the outset, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that, with the benefit of your diplomatic experience and skill, the discussions in this Committee will be more fruitful. Our tasks this year have a particular significance and I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you lead the work of this Committee to a successful conclusion. I also wish to extend congratulations to other members of the Bureau.

On the eve of a new millennium, the Government of Japan considers that this year's session of the First Committee provides us with a valuable opportunity to reach a common understanding on long-term future goals in the field of disarmament, as well as to renew the political will of the international community to address current and pertinent issues in an effort to achieve those goals. Even apart from its significance as the final session before the advent of a new millennium, this year's session of the First Committee is entitled to be considered especially important in view of the need to reverse the discouraging trends of the past several years.

It is undeniable, however, that considerable progress has been made in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation since the end of the cold war. A wide range of concrete nuclear-disarmament measures have been implemented, such as the reduction of nuclear weapons by the United States and the Russian Federation, the dismantlement and disposal of excess nuclear weapons, a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes and the placement of excess fissile material under international control. In addition, new nuclear-weapon-free zones have been created in Africa and South-East Asia and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Model Additional Protocol has been concluded. These efforts deserve genuine appreciation.

However, it is also an irrefutable fact that efforts in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament have been stalled during the past several years. START II has not yet been ratified six years after signature and the START III negotiations have had a rough take-off. Multilateral efforts have stagnated. Since the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to embark on substantive work, such as the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the discussions on nuclear disarmament in general.

Having said that, we are encouraged that some steps, modest though they may be, have been taken in some areas of concern; these are expected to produce positive results. The recent commencement of discussions on START III between the United States and Russia, which are expected to facilitate the future START III negotiations, is an example.

On the multilateral front, the States members of the Conference on Disarmament demonstrated a strong common will to preserve this year's achievement and impetus to move forward through inter-sessional consultations. Japan strongly hopes that those consultations will bear fruit and that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to make substantive and early progress next year.

The nuclear tests conducted in South Asia last year were a challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to the disarmament efforts made by the international community. Following the tests, Japan took measures, in cooperation with other countries, to preserve and enhance the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Although one and a half years have passed since then, it is not yet appropriate to close the book on this issue. While international efforts have been made to minimize the consequences and improve

the situation, events such as the recent armed conflict over Kashmir and the announcement of the draft Indian nuclear doctrine are sources of concern. The nuclear and security situation in the region is in fact deteriorating. It is essential for the international community to continue to address the problem from the global and regional points of view. All the measures that need to be taken are spelled out in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998), and Japan continues to call upon the two countries concerned to make every effort to implement those measures, especially by signing and ratifying the CTBT.

Directly after those nuclear tests, the Government of Japan took the initiative in organizing the Tokyo Forum on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament to discuss the ways and means of stopping trends towards nuclear proliferation and of revitalizing nuclear disarmament efforts. The Forum conducted an in-depth analysis of the current international security environment and issued a report containing a number of concrete recommendations for pursuing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. While Japan recognizes that some countries may be unable readily to accept all of these recommendations, we nevertheless believe that they outline concrete and realistic steps for advancing towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Japan thus considers that they may form a basis for deliberations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in various international settings. Japan is willing to consider the possibility of following up the recommendations.

Let me present Japan's basic thinking on ways in which the international community should promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. First of all, I must acknowledge that considerable differences of view and position exist on this issue. These differences are rooted in such factors as the possession or non-possession of nuclear weapons, alliance relationships, respective regional situations, and accession or non-accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and/or nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties. Despite these differences, the international community has succeeded in creating common ground by agreeing on the goal of the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons and the achievement of the near-universality of the NPT. Not only is the NPT the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime; it also serves as the essential foundation for the promotion of nuclear disarmament.

Having reached agreement on the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons as our common goal, we must now focus our efforts on narrowing the divergence of positions on the speed and approach to be taken in achieving that goal. As difficult as this task may be, I am confident that we have the wisdom to meet the challenge. Towards that end, I propose that, if we are not yet in a position to agree on the entire road map to our final destination, we should opt to agree on certain medium-term measures. Indeed, it is not essential to agree on every measure at this stage, so long as we have the same goal in mind. It would be more sensible and realistic to negotiate the successive steps while proceeding first with those that are within our reach.

Let me list measures which I believe are feasible in the near-term: the early entry into force of the CTBT; the early conclusion of negotiations on a fissile materials cut-off treaty and the early entry into force of such a treaty; discussions on multilateral steps following the signing of a fissile materials cut-off treaty; progress in the START process; the further reduction of nuclear arsenals by the five nuclear-weapon States, unilaterally or through negotiations; and the reduction of non-strategic or tactical nuclear weapons. In addition, the ongoing reduction and dismantlement of nuclear weapons have made such issues as the safe and effective management of resultant fissile materials and the prevention of illegal trafficking of those materials more important. In this context, the Government of Japan pledged $200 million at the G-8 Summit in Cologne this year as its financial contribution to the related projects in Russia.

In order to reach agreement on future long-term steps, we will need to have substantive discussions in multilateral forums. These discussions can benefit from the wisdom of civil society as the representative of broadly-based international opinion.

At the NPT Review Conference which will be convened next year, the NPT States parties will review the Treaty's implementation, discuss its future and assess the strengthened review process itself. As this will be the first Review Conference since the indefinite extension of the Treaty, its success will be crucial to the future operation of the NPT.

There is a popular proverb which says: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." This "one big thing" that the hedgehog and my delegation know is that the international community stands at a crossroads and does not have the luxury of allowing the 2000 Review Conference to fail. All of us must summon up the political will to ensure that the Conference will not be convened in vain. This session of the First Committee provides a valuable opportunity to pave the way

for the success of that Conference. I sincerely hope that all United Nations Member States will seize the opportunity and engage in a forward-looking and constructive debate.

It is worth noting that last week in Vienna the Secretary-General convened the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT. As President of the Conference, Japan, in cooperation with other participating States, made every effort to ensure its success. Once again, we call upon all States that have not yet signed and/or ratified the Treaty, in particular those whose ratification is needed for its entry into force, to do so at the earliest possible date, as stipulated in the Final Declaration of that Conference.

I shall now move on to other disarmament issues and touch upon some of the salient points.

With respect to biological weapons, my Government's basic position is that the verification mechanism for biological weapons requires the support of the industry concerned. The mechanism must be efficient as well as cost-effective. Although serious negotiations have been conducted for several years on a protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), we note that a divergence of views still exists on some key elements. In order to ensure that the negotiations are concluded before the next BWC Review Conference in 2001, further efforts to bridge the differences are urgently required. Japan will fully cooperate with other countries to achieve this goal.

Secondly, I would like to offer some thoughts on small arms, an issue which is now central to the agenda on conventional disarmament. It is also an issue to which Japan attaches great importance, since it is these weapons that are actually killing people in various conflicts around the world. We welcome and highly appreciate the Secretary-General's report (A/54/258) prepared with the assistance of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. We are now at the stage at which concrete measures recommended in that report should be carried out.

The international conference on small arms, which will be held no later than 2001, is expected to set new international guidelines with a view to reducing and preventing excessive and destabilizing accumulations, as well as transfers of small arms and light weapons. Bearing in mind the significance of this conference and the need for it to succeed, Japan will submit a draft resolution on small arms again this year. I will speak on this draft resolution at a later time during this session.

The third issue is that of anti-personnel landmines. This is one of the most pressing global issues from the disarmament as well as humanitarian perspectives. The two important legal instruments on anti-personnel landmines — namely, the Ottawa Convention and the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons — entered into force recently. It is truly a welcome achievement and undoubtedly a significant step towards the goal of the complete ban of anti-personnel landmines. However, we must not be complacent. Inasmuch as many important countries in this field have not yet acceded to these instruments, Japan believes it is essential to create a legal framework that can involve these countries while maintaining the global and total ban on anti-personnel landmines as our goal. In this context, the most realistic and intermediate measure is the negotiation of a treaty banning the transfer of anti-personnel landmines that will be fully consistent with the two existing instruments. Japan strongly hopes that such negotiations will commence at the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible.

History has taught us that regional strife can sometimes erupt into a conflict with global implications. Thus, the importance of regional efforts for peace and security cannot be overstated. Japan therefore pays particular attention to the activities of the three United Nations Regional Centres for peace and disarmament. It has pledged $50,000 each to the African and Latin American Centres to help revitalize their activities. The Asia-Pacific Centre of Kathmandu, which is not physically situated in that city, has been very active and is also currently playing a key role in drafting a treaty for the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. My Government is ready to make a financial contribution of $420,000 to boost the activities related to the treaty. Japan expects that each of these regional centres will continue its valuable activities for the benefit of the entire world.

The Government of Japan welcomes the recent announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on its restraint regarding a missile launch as a result of the bilateral consultations held in Berlin between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This development will improve the security environment of North-East Asia. The Government of Japan highly appreciates the efforts deployed by the Governments concerned.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Japan's firm belief that disarmament can be meaningful only when it is achieved by concrete measures. While we are aware of the enormous challenge which disarmament efforts pose for Governments, we believe that, with the necessary political will, we can successfully meet them. I would like on this occasion to stress the importance of resolutions that outline concrete and achievable measures that can be implemented.

With this basic policy in mind, Japan is determined to continue promoting further progress in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. In this pivotal year, I cannot but feel confident that the First Committee will make significant progress in aiming for the success of the landmark meetings to be held in coming years.

Ms. Besker (Croatia): I am pleased to add the voice of Croatia's delegation to that of preceding speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee and in pledging you our full support. I wish to thank you for your introductory remarks, in which you succinctly captured the difficulties and challenges facing us.

I should also like to commend the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his thoughtful and comprehensive statement, which Croatia fully endorses.

Before considering developments in disarmament and international security in 1999, I should like briefly to note Croatia's record in the implementation of regional and global disarmament agreements. Croatia has fulfilled all its obligations related to the 1996 Agreement on Subregional Arms Control. We actively participate in the negotiations on article V of the Dayton Agreement and support the review work of the 1994 Vienna Document. We hope to benefit from the revised Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

This summer, Croatia hosted the second Regional Conference on Anti-personnel Landmines. The Conference contributed to strengthening the national and regional fight against landmines and mobilizing support for demining and victim rehabilitation. Croatia is most appreciative of all the assistance given to us in combatting this particularly difficult and painful problem and, in particular, we are grateful for the recent assistance of the countries of the European Union.

We consider the recent adoption of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe to be a significant step towards the democratic stabilization of the region and its integration into the European whole. Croatia urges all participating countries and organizations to live up to their commitments so that the activities envisaged by the Pact may begin to materialize.

Furthermore, Croatia is a party to all global disarmament treaties. It will shortly ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Protocols II and IV of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Croatia actively participates in the negotiations on a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention. We remain committed to the consolidation of hard-won gains and to advancing the arms control and disarmament process.

In regard to global developments in arms control and disarmament in 1999, this delegation shares the strong concern expressed by many representatives here. We recognize the promising disarmament achievements of the first half of this decade. We also welcome the progress made multilaterally, bilaterally and unilaterally during the last year, in particular the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention, of Protocols II and IV of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, as well as the relatively smooth implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

However, I cannot but recall that last year this Committee took action on 48 draft resolutions. Almost none of the solemn commitments we made here have been pursued with any productive effect. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is a blatant case in point.

The discussion on vital issues affecting nuclear non-proliferation and international security is practically deadlocked. This includes the review process for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the continuation of the START treaties, the entry into force of the CTBT, negotiations on a fissile-material treaty, agreement on security assurances, and multilateral discussion on follow-up steps related to nuclear disarmament.

The problems are exacerbated by the ramifications of nuclear testing in South Asia, regional ballistic and nuclear proliferation, missile-defences development, and the growing number of military and political conflicts in the world. These developments have set back efforts to strengthen non-proliferation and advance nuclear disarmament. They have put global and regional security at further risk.

In his report to the General Assembly the Secretary-General warned about growing threats to world stability and argued for better prevention strategies and disarmament, especially in regard to small arms and light weapons. Croatia fully supports his appeal. Preventive disarmament requires substantial progress in the reduction and elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, as envisaged by the NPT and the 1995 Review and Extension Conference decisions.

Our delegation welcomes the report of the Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. We are appreciative of the Government of Japan's initiative in organizing this Forum. Indeed, the lack of political will on the part of nuclear and nuclear-capable countries to fully respect and fully abide by global standards, on the one hand, and deteriorating international relations, on the other, undermine existing disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. We concur with the Tokyo Forum conclusion, highlighted by the Under-Secretary-General in his introductory statement, that there is an urgent need for concerted action and a realistic dialogue so that recent setbacks may be reversed in a way that will take into account the security concerns of all peace-loving countries.

The First Committee has to contribute to breaking the current political and diplomatic deadlock. We urge all countries, and in particular the nuclear and nuclear-capable countries, to reassess their policies and postures in view of present circumstances. We all should recommit ourselves to the goals of arms control and genuine disarmament, based on full compliance with global norms, including the recognition of the indivisibility of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We urge all countries, and especially the major Powers, to act on those commitments.

Setbacks notwithstanding, we have to continue to strive for a more secure world. We cannot just stand back and watch its deterioration. Our delegation recognizes the intensive efforts and the constructive contribution of a number of countries that have been trying to explore a new middle ground for forging a fresh consensus. It is high time to capitalize on the useful proposals that have been advanced so far and that, hopefully, will be advanced in the days to come. Vision and boldness are needed to build upon those proposals.

By doing so, we might find a way out of the limbo into which the disarmament process has been slipping. That limbo could become either a place of lost causes or a place of unfulfilled potential. It is up to us all to define it.

A keen sense of history and an awareness of the stakes involved make us believe that the second option is the only responsible course if we are indeed honest in our declared commitment to peace and global security for all our countries.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): The Brazilian delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that your experience will help make this a productive session. Allow me also to express our appreciation to Ambassador André Mernier of Belgium for his efficiency in conducting the work of our Committee last year.

Brazil wishes to place on record its support for the work of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala. His professionalism and dedication have helped the United Nations discharge its responsibilities in the field of disarmament.

The task entrusted to you, Mr. Chairman, is by no means an easy one. There is, no doubt, a broad consensus on the end issues relating to disarmament. All Member States profess to favour the abolition of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In spite of our common resolve, disarmament efforts last year, especially in the nuclear arena, were once more marked by a stalemate.

Together with the other members of the New Agenda Coalition, we are encouraged by the level of support the initiative has gathered. The pursuit, in parallel, of a series of mutually reinforcing measures at the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral levels is the motivating force behind the New Agenda formulation. The interim measures we propose be addressed by the nuclear-weapon States aim at reducing the nuclear threat and de-emphasizing the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies. They are realistic and attainable.

On the eve of a new millennium, we are confronted with the urgency of breathing new life into the disarmament process. The continued possession of nuclear weapons is being re-rationalized. Nuclear doctrines are being reaffirmed. The New Agenda countries believe it is imperative to counter such ominous trends and to speed up the pace of negotiations towards the goal of the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

Having ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) last year, we add our voice to

those who rightfully demand the early entry into force of the CTBT. We call upon States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT unconditionally and without delay. We urge the three nuclear-weapon States that have yet to ratify the Treaty to underscore their commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation by bringing to a successful conclusion their respective ratification processes.

The world expects strong signals from the five nuclear-weapon States with regard to their commitment to the full implementation of article VI of the NPT. In the same spirit, we urge the three nuclear-weapons-capable States to renounce the pursuit of nuclear weapons and to adhere to the NPT.

At this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, Brazil pointed to both positive and negative trends in the disarmament arena. Now, a few months later, it seems, unfortunately, that the negative trends towards immobility and inertia are gaining the upper hand. The Conference on Disarmament has long been in stalemate. It is against this background that we are meeting. Let us hope that in the First Committee we will regain the momentum in the crucial area of nuclear disarmament.

A concrete expression of this positive impulse would be progress in the forthcoming NPT Review Conference. Unfortunately, the third Preparatory Committee was unable to agree on matters of substance. But we hope that the international community will not waste the opportunity provided by the Review Conference to roll back recent negative developments in the process of nuclear disarmament.

Equally, it is of the essence that we consider parallel steps pursuant to article VI of the NPT, which foresees systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons. An appropriate instrument to attain that goal could be a nuclear weapons convention, based on models provided by the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. It would be a logical step to follow the CTBT and the fissile material treaty. Brazil sees no reason not to start negotiations on a non-discriminatory and effectively verifiable convention banning nuclear weapons.

Brazil will continue to welcome efforts to expand the number of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We are pleased that there has been progress in Central and South-East Asia, but disappointed that South Asia and the Middle East have not followed suit. A nuclear-weapon-free world is an aspiration of the entire international community, as well as a common responsibility. This is not a matter that concerns only the five nuclear-weapon States. All States are entitled to take part in these negotiations.

Brazil will once again present a draft resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas. This proposal received 154 votes in the General Assembly last year, a sign of support of the large majority of Member States for the consolidation and expansion of the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

We welcomed the entry into force last March of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Having ratified the Convention in April, Brazil participated in the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, held in Mozambique last May. Yet, despite the commitment to the Ottawa Convention, landmines continue to be sown in many places.

We are extremely concerned that the Disarmament Commission has failed to reach consensus on the question of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. A carefully prepared special session would enable the international community to make an inventory of what has been achieved and lay the foundations for future work. The idea of a special session should not be allowed to die.

The issue of small arms will require much of our attention during the present General Assembly. In his statement in the General Assembly and in the Security Council ministerial debate, the Brazilian Foreign Minister underlined the importance of combating the destabilizing accumulation of and illicit trafficking in small arms. In South America, the flow of small arms is closely associated with organized crime and drug trafficking and therefore poses a real threat to democratic societies.

We commend the work done by the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and endorse its conclusions and recommendations. We fully expect that this Committee will be able to agree to convene, in 2001, an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. Regionally, we are satisfied with the work done in the Organization of American States. The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, adopted in 1997, is an eloquent

example of our region's commitment to tackling the problem of small arms.

As concerns other types of weapons, the recently adopted Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition will make participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms obligatory for American countries. We believe it will contribute significantly towards making this important confidence-building instrument truly universal.

Progress in the area of small arms and other conventional weapons should not distract us from the threat of nuclear holocaust. Let us clearly remind ourselves that weapons of mass destruction can wipe human life off the face of the earth. The disarmament process is founded on confidence and good faith. It requires confidence that both sides will implement their mutually agreed obligations and their commitments in good faith. Whenever suspicion prevails over confidence, or when words prevail over deeds in good faith, disarmament efforts are eroded.

Brazil is willing and able to do its share to help the international community to move forward in the disarmament field. We are guided by the desire to see our common security enhanced and to provide multilateral responses to universal problems, as opposed to seeing arsenals of weapons. World public opinion overwhelmingly expects the disarmament community to show, unequivocally, that we can and will respond to our shared aspirations for a world of greater peace, security and social and economic well-being. Brazil is confident that the First Committee can send a clear message in this sense.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I wish to stress to members that, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second. I request members to abide by that ruling.

Mr. Shakerian (Islamic Republic of Iran): This important forum, the First Committee, has many vital items on its agenda, any of which is capable of fundamentally affecting international peace and security in particular, and the international community as a whole at a more general level. These include general and complete disarmament, the granting of negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States by the nuclear-weapon States, the anti-ballistic missile treaties and several other items. But I am disappointed that a misunderstanding about the bilateral relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates has been raised in this forum and, reluctantly, I must respond.

The claim raised today by the delegation of the United Arab Emirates against the territorial integrity of my country is unacceptable and baseless. Since our position on this issue is very clear, I need not get into specifics. I would just like to emphasize that the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to its obligations, including those arising from the 1971 understanding.

We have friendly ties with our neighbours in the Persian Gulf area, and we stand ready, as in the past, to enter into substantive, good-faith discussions with officials of the United Arab Emirates to solve any possible misunderstanding.

Our message to our neighbours, including the United Arab Emirates, is one of friendship and cooperation. We continue to make efforts to strengthen confidence and cooperation in the Persian Gulf region. The consolidation of peace and security is a matter of great importance in our region, and my country has spared no efforts to date in furthering the cause of peace and security in the region.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I do not wish at this stage to spend a great deal of time in a legal or political dialogue. If my Iranian colleague wishes to know the history of the 1971 occupation of the three islands of the Emirates before the departure of British forces from the Gulf region, he can turn to the annals of the Security Council, which has been seized of this matter since 1971. It is untenable for Iran to say that it is working hard to ease tensions and instability in the region: occupying the territory of a small country such as the United Arab Emirates is unacceptable, as is the letter and the spirit of what the representative of Iran has just stated. This occupation is similar to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and of the Syrian Golan Heights. Iran is occupying Arab territories: the three islands belong to the United Arab Emirates.

As this matter remains before the Security Council, I shall go into no further detail. Moreover, the international community knows full well that these islands are occupied by Iran.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.